

A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF AMALGAMATION OF THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN POLICE DEPARTMENTS OF NIGERIA IN 1930

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Abstract

This paper examines the historical dynamics that metamorphosed into the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Police Departments of Nigeria by the British colonial government in 1930. The paper posits that the reform was largely part of the British extant colonial policy directed at the exploitation of Nigeria. The paper argues further that the amalgamation was desired more as a means of alleviating British economic difficulties of the 1920s and the 1930s. The paper therefore concludes that, contrary to the colonial government's claim that the amalgamation was strictly designed for the development of Nigeria; the amalgamation was actually projected towards the maximisation of British colonial interest at the expense of Nigeria.

Keywords: Police, Amalgamation, Native, Ordinance, Protectorate

Introduction

The formation of what is today known as the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) started in the late 19th century, when the colonial government began to establish paramilitary organisations, primarily for the protection of British merchants and colonial officials, who felt unsecured among the natives, who wanted to defend themselves against colonial oppression (Alemika 2010). In line with this motive, the colonial government also encouraged the traditional chiefs to operate their own police forces, the Native Authority Police (NAP), provided they were used to accelerate the attainment of colonial intentions

(Rotimi: 2001). The Native Authority Ordinance of 1916 and the Protectorate Ordinance of 1924, for instance, empowered the chiefs to maintain law and order in their domains. Thus, they were given the authority to recruit people as security agents in ensuring peace and stability. There emerged, therefore, various police establishments across Nigeria. However, by the late 1920s, these numerous police forces had largely been compressed into three administrative bodies, the Northern Police Department, the Southern Police Departments and the Native Authority Police. And finally, on April 1, 1930, the colonial government amalgamated the Northern and Southern Police Departments to become the Nigeria Police Force, with its headquarters in Lagos (Okoigun 2000). With the new reform, the system of having two Inspectors General of Police (one for the Northern Protectorate and another one for the Southern Protectorate) was suspended and replaced with that of an Inspector General of Police for the colony (NAI CSO 17763/63).

Although there had been a series of works examining the intentions of the colonial government as it concerned the establishment and operations of police forces in colonial Nigeria, the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Police Departments of Nigeria seems to have received little academic attention. It is on this note that this paper examines the historical factors that influenced the amalgamation of the two departments in April 1930. The paper relies on primary and secondary sources which were critically examined. The paper is, therefore, divided into three major sections. The first section forms the colonial official argument for the reform. The second section critically appraises the official claim and presents alternative argument. The third part therefore forms the findings and conclusion of the paper.

The Official Position of the Colonial Government

Official position in this context represents the reasons that the British colonial authority provided for the merger of the two separate police departments. According to the colonial authority, the merger was chiefly an attempt to bring about administrative convenience, which in turn would be a means to an effective policing in Nigeria (NAI CSO 17763/14). Thus, following the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914, administration of Nigeria was finally centralised and Lagos became the headquarters the new political arrangement. However, two separate police departments continued to operate within the colony. It was, therefore, argued that this pattern of administration of the Police did not facilitate effective communication between the northern and southern Nigeria. This duplication was also argued to be a bane of quick decision-making. For instance, in a

letter addressed to the Chief Secretary to the Colonial Government in Lagos on November 4, 1926, the Lieutenant Governor, Northern Province argued that:

The chief reason for amalgamation is that the Governor shall have at headquarters one officer who will be in a position to advise him on any matter concerning the police force of the country. A subsidiary reason is that in matter of legislation it will be necessary to consult the Heads of two separate Departments, which often involves much time and correspondence (NAI CSO 17763/14).

Similarly, in 1928, F.M. Baddeley, the Chief Secretary to the Nigerian Government, wrote the Secretary of Colony claiming that:

The principal advantage of amalgamation would be creation of a central controlling authority with regard to the matters of routine and discipline, while still maintaining a senior officer with whom each Lieutenant Governor and the Administrator could communicate directly on all matters concerning the police within the area under his control (NAI CSO 17763/26).

From the above, it can be deduced that the reasons for the amalgamation, according to the colonial government, were strictly the desire for effective communication and efficiency of the Police. Considering the poor transport system between the Northern and Southern Provinces, in an age of no sophisticated communication, and the administrative bottleneck involving the exchange of logistics between the two forces, one may want to swallow the official argument completely. However, as convincing as this argument seemed, the amalgamation did not bring any overwhelming uniformity in terms of principle, condition and operation as administrators of police in each protectorate continued to be responsible to their Lieutenant Governor and other colonial administrators, rather than the Inspector General of Police (NAI: 17763/119). The two departments significantly continued to operate distinctively. The real sign of uniformity seemed to be in their uniform and the administrative structure, especially in the top echelon of the Police. The above shortcomings, therefore, put the official claim in serious doubts. Based on the foregoing, it is therefore crucial that, one should probe further to have more insight into the factors that prompted the amalgamation.

The Influential Role of the 1920's British Economy

Recent evidence has demonstrated that there was a connection between Police amalgamation and British economy in the late 1920s and early 1930s. To be properly put, the amalgamation was one of the economic measures meant for the alleviation of British economic downturn that rocked London during post-World War I years. Studies on the

British economy in the 1920s have identified the Great Depression that affected Britain and other European countries to be a protracted effect of World War I (Broadberry and Howlett: 2003). It should be noted that Britain was, arguably, the biggest economy in the world, especially during the few years that preceded World War I (Nason and Vahey: 2011). For instance, Britain was 'the leading trading and lending nations' of the pre-World War I years. Aside the fact that British merchandise imports and exports were bigger than those of Germany and the United States of America, Sterling was the most popular international medium of exchange (Einchengreen: 2002). Furthermore, London by 1913, had emerged the biggest and most important financial centre in the world, managing different forms of bank accounts for international business individuals and corporations, and serving as the most important foreign reservoir for several nations (Lindert: 1969). With overseas stock investments worth about £4 billion in early 1914, Britain's stock exchange was also the largest globally in pre-war years (Einchengreen: 2002).

The trend, however, soon changed. This was primarily as a result of extensive mobilisation of resources- human and material- towards the war effort. For example, in order to finance the war effort, Britain had to obtain massive international loans with the United States being the most significant financier. Britain also liquidated several of its foreign possessions. It has been reported that about 10 per cent of the total foreign assets of Britain was liquidated to support the war effort (Morgan: 1952). It should be noted that most of these possessions were originally private investments of British citizens which were requisitioned by the government (Morgan: 1952). These events had significant aftershock on Britain's economy during the immediate post war years and throughout the 1920s. By the late 1920s, full scale economic depression had set in. For example, Britain's international trade, that was one of the major strengths of its economy, drastically declined. This was evident in its loss of trade monopoly in Latin America to the United States. Britain also lost her trade monopoly, especially in the area of textile, in India to Japan. In fact by the middle of the 1920s, the real GDP per capita had fallen to about 1 per cent of what it was in 1913. National output also dropped drastically to about 20 per cent of what it was in 1913 (Einchengreen: 2002). This decline in international economy was to bring about declination of Sterling in terms of value and international significance. Thus, Dollar began to rise at the expense of Sterling. While Britain was entangled in a web of external loans, British debtors, especially France, that had used the loans they acquired from Britain to support their own war efforts and now being faced with economic recession, were unable to pay back the loans (Morgan: 1952).

As one of the few options left, Britain had to turn to and rely more than ever before on its colonies, introducing new economic policies in those colonies in order to generate money for London. For example, tough economic policies were introduced in the Gold Coast, Gambia, and Sierra Leone. In Nigeria, which is our focus, import duties were increased, while obnoxious taxes were imposed on the people. The Anti-Tax Riots in Warri between 1927/1928 (Asiwaju: Ikime: 1999) and the Aba Women's Riot of 1929/1930 were some of the violent reactions of the natives to the unfriendly post-war colonial economic policies (Afigbo: Ikime: 1999).

In line with the above intension, the colonial office also began to consider the restructuring of the administrative departments in the colony, chiefly to reduce the cost of administering the colony. Thus, the processes to amalgamate departments such as Education, Police and Prison were set in motion (Tamuno: Ikime: 1999). However, discussions and the process for the amalgamation of the Prison were soon suspended because it was realised that amalgamation of the Prison had no economic prospect. For example, the Lieutenant Governor, Northern Provinces warned, in a confidential letter forwarded to the Chief Secretary to the Government in Lagos on March 3, 1927, that:

I have further considered this matter and have come to the definite conclusion that amalgamation of the Prison Departments would not result in the economy but rather the reverse' (NAI CSO 17763/48).

While amalgamation of the Prison had no financial prospect, that of the Police, however, appeared to be. Although official discussions concerning amalgamation of the Police were obvious as far back as 1926, nonetheless, no reasonable progress was made until 1928. This delay was due to the fact that the colonial office in London and some officials in Nigeria could not be satisfactorily convinced on how the amalgamation would contribute to the economy. For example on October 21, 1926, the Lieutenant Governor of Southern Province stated in a letter to the Chief Secretary to the Government in Lagos that 'I can only see advantages, though not financial ones, in amalgamating the Police Departments of Southern and Northern Provinces...' (NAI CSO 17763/49). In fact, between 1926 and 1927, it appeared that dialogue on the amalgamation of the Police would die a natural death like that of the Prison. However, a confidential letter (proposal) forwarded by the Governor of Nigeria to the Secretary of State for Colony in 1928, which showcased the details of the financial benefit that Britain stood to benefit from the amalgamation, immediately brought the matter to the limelight. An attachment to the letter highlighted the financial implication of the proposal as follows:

Existing establishment of staff appointment of the police forces**SOUTHERN PROVINCE**

	(£) Salary	Duty Pay	Salary	Duty Pay
Inspector General	1,200	240		
Deputy Inspector General	1,000	200		
Senior Commissioner	960	96		
Senior Commissioner	960	96		
Total	4,120	632	4,120	632

NORTHERN PROVINCE

	(£) Salary	Duty Pay	Salary	Duty Pay
Inspector General	1,000	200		
Deputy Inspector General	960	96		
Total	1,960	296	1,960	296
Grand Total			6,080	928

Establishment of staff appointment on Amalgamation

	(£) Salary	Duty Pay
Inspector General	1,400	280
Deputy Inspector General	1,100	220
Assistant Inspector General	1,000	200
Assistant Inspector General	1,000	200
Senior Commissioner	960	96
Total	5,460	996
Savings in salaries:	620	
Increase on duty pay:	68	
Net Saving	552	

Source: NAI CSO 17763/X

Understanding the importance of the Police to the society, it may be hard to agree that the process of amalgamation of the Police was partly driven by such a small amount of money. It will be reasonable to think this way in a society, where police was established strictly for social responsibility, but definitely not in a society where police was established for the protection of capitalist interest. It should be noted, however, that this was not the first time that the colonial government would embark on reforms similar to this. For example, the amalgamation of Lagos Colony and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria to form the Colony

and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria in May 1906 was largely economic. According to Tamuno (Ikime: 1999): the primary aim of the government was to use the better financial position of the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria to cover the cost of administration and development in the financially weak Colony and Protectorate of Lagos, then saddled with the white elephant of a railway in need of extension since 1901.

Furthermore, amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Protectorates in 1914 was also done in a similar circumstance. The two Protectorates were merged, mainly, to use the financial surplus of the Southern Protectorate to cover for the budget deficit of the Northern Protectorate. It is interesting to know that, financially, the two Protectorates were amalgamated, without due consideration of the native's opinions, mainly because of mere £100,000 subvention needed to pay wages in the North and which was hoped to be generated from the £2000,000 surplus of the Southern Protectorate (Tamuno: Ikime: 1999). Thus, an administration that amalgamated about 250 ethnic groups with different historical backgrounds (giving no consideration to their future) because of that meagre amount, would not hesitate in considering the amalgamation of an ordinary department of government because of amount even smaller than £552. In a simple arithmetic, if ten of such departments were amalgamated with the possibility of realising the same financial figure from each amalgamation, then the colonial government would be saving £5,520 for itself annually. And, if the principle of colonialism, which was parasitic in nature, is anything to do with, no amount of money was meagre to any coloniser, especially Britain. Moreover, as it has been stated above, the Police was established mainly for the protection of colonial economic concern. So, the consideration of the possible impact of such action on civil responsibility of the Police could not have come up.

Contrary Proposal Emanating from Resident Officials

The above proposal, however, did not sale through mainly because many British officials, especially those that were resident in the Northern Provinces opposed it. They argued that reduction in the number of police officers in the provinces would lead to inefficiency of the Police, which could endanger the lives of the officials who resided in the colony ((NAI CSO 17763/10)). This fear must have come as result of a number of protests made by the natives, who were tired of being continuously exploited by their colonisers. They however concluded that if amalgamation was so desired by London, there should be increment in the number of the officers and that the head of the Police in the provinces should 'continue to be directly responsible to the Lieutenant Governors' (NAI CSO 17763/9). They

also supported their argument with a proposal, which, contrarily to the former, advocated increment in the number of senior positions in the Police. The financial implication of this proposal was indicated as follows:

Existing establishment of staff appointment of the police forces

SOUTHERN PROVINCES

	(£) Salary	Duty Pay	Salary	Duty Pay
Inspector General	1,200	240		
Deputy Inspector General	1,000	200		
Senior Commissioner	960	96		
Senior Commissioner	960	96		
Total S. P. & Colony	4,120	632	4,120	632

NORTHERN PROVINCES

	(£) Salary	Duty Pay	Salary	Duty Pay
Inspector General	1,000	200		
Deputy Inspector General	960	96		
Total N. P.	1,960	296	1,960	296
Grand Total			6,080	928

Establishment of staff appointment on Amalgamation

	(£) Salary	Duty Pay	
Inspector General	1,400	280	
Deputy Inspector General	1,100	220	Lagos
Assistant Inspector General	1,000	200	
(North)			Kaduna
Assistant Inspector General	1,000	200	
(South)			Enugu
Senior Commissioner (North)	960	96	Kaduna
Senior Commissioner (South)	960	96	Enugu
Total	£6,460	£1092	
Increase on salaries:	£340		
Increase on duty pay:	164		
Net Increase	504		

Source: NAI CSO 17763/63

Eventually, it was this new proposal (after prolonged discussions that were confined to the government circle) that was approved by the colonial government. At this point, one may therefore want to hurriedly query and conclude that if economic gain was the main drive of the amalgamation, the colonial government should not have thought of increasing its expenditure on the Police. The point is that the new position of the colonial government was not in the interest of the development of the colony, but for the ‘efficiency’ of the Police, which would in turn better serve the interest of Britain. It will be necessary at this point, therefore, to examine the British colonial notion of police efficiency in Nigeria. Police efficiency, in the above context, strictly meant the ability of the Police to adequately protect the colonial officials and intimidate the natives for the purpose of effective exploitation of the colony for the development of Britain. Since taxes were being increased and other harsh economic policies which would definitely generate more proceeds than ordinary financial cut on Police expenditure awaited implementation, and with more public resistance like the Aba Riot being envisaged, a formidable police was therefore desired more than ever before. It is important to understand that though these resident officials expected the Police to be efficient in ensuring peace and tranquillity within the colony, such peace and tranquillity were, however, not aimed at in the interest of the colony. They were targeted at the protection of colonial officers and promotion of everything that colonialism represented. For instance, in a letter forwarded on November, 11, 1926 by the Lieutenant Governor, Northern Provinces to the Honourable Chief Secretary to the Government in Lagos, it was argued that:

I confess that I feel uneasy about this proposal. The connection between the Administrative Service and the Police is so close that I am frankly suspicious about any step that might weaken it. The Police in many places are the eyes and ears of the administration. They are under the order of the Resident. As a rule, too, they are his fighting force, if fighting has to be done (NAI CSO 17763/9).

This further substantiates the fact that the colonial police, right from the outset, was not meant for the development of Nigeria. The fraudulent means with which the British colonised Nigerian communities and their fear that the colonised might, violently, repudiate their domination greatly influenced the establishment of the Police in the colony. The establishment of the Police was necessary to prevent open confrontations ‘between the native... and the imperial merchants’ (Alemika and Chukwuma: nd.) as the economic interests of the two usually clashed and this often resulted into disagreements, which often negatively affected British merchants interests. Invariably, peace and tranquillity in the colony were means to an end, which was exploitation of the colony. That was why the British

at different times embarked on police reforms without seeking the opinions of the natives. As earlier observed, the establishment of different police forces by the colonial power and their representatives, at the early stage of the colonisation, was crucial to the sustenance of the British incursion. For example the first major attempt by the colonial government to establish the Police was in the formation of the Consular Guard in Lagos in 1861, the same year that Lagos was conquered (Ugbe: 2002). This force was created to protect the British Consuls and the interest they represented. In fact, the nomenclature speaks volume. This force was used to oppress the natives such as Chief Dosumu, who were not happy with the colonisation and the economic exploitation of their land by Britain, and therefore resisted such an alien dominion (Ugbe: 2002). The imperial power perceived these natives as threats to its interest and formed the force to oppress and coerce them to submission. The subsequent police forces, the Hausa Constabulary established in 1879; the Royal Niger Company Constabulary, 1888; the Lagos Police, 1896 and the Niger Coast Constabulary, 1894, were formed based on familial intensions. For example, the Niger Coast Constabulary, which was formed in Calabar following the proclamation of the Niger Coast Protectorate in 1893, was employed by Annesley, the Acting Consul, to attack the palace of Andemeno in Cross River (Ehinder: 1998). The Native Ordinances of 1914 and 1916, as earlier on observed, encouraged the formation of independent police forces by the traditional chiefs for as long as they operated in the interest of imperial Britain. Throughout Nigeria, armed mobile police through 'raids, arrests and detention' enforced colonial will on the natives (Alemika: 2010). According to Onoge (Tamuno: 1993), the police through:

The enforcement of unpopular direct taxation, the raiding of labour camps, and the violent suppression of strikes,... ensured the creation, supply and discipline of the proletarian labour force required by colonial capitalism. The police enforced the criminalization of lucrative indigenous industries like the manufacture of alcohol and traditional trading patterns across national borders in order to protect the colonial economy from competition.

Thus, while economic challenges of the 1920s evoked the concern for a compressed and less expensive police, the colonial men on the spot, who feared that a compressed police could jeopardise their security, eminently opposed such a plan. They argued that a bigger but unitary police under a close monitoring of the Lieutenant Governors would guarantee the safety of the officials on the spot and make them more effective in discharging their responsibilities. The end product of this process, was opined, would better serve the purpose of colonisation. For example, in a memorandum dated September 9, 1929, the Lieutenant Governor of the Northern Protectorate argued that:

I consider it necessary that the Lieutenant-Governor should have power at any moment to intervene in the conduct of Police work in the Province, I cannot see, since a Lieutenant-Governor is in every sense the Governor's deputy... (NAI CSO 17763/130).

This change of course can be best explained as a decision arrived at through the application of economic principle of cost and profit analysis. In other words, though an elaborate police would cost the colonial government more to manage financially, however, such a police was preferable since it would better protect British lives, properties and investments, especially as more native resistance were expected in response to the newly introduced tough economic policies.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the events that snowballed into the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Police Departments in April 1930. The amalgamation, as it has been demonstrated, was largely influenced by the economic recession that gripped Britain in the 1920s and lasted through the 1930s. Although the paper does not claim that the amalgamation was not partly influenced by the factors claimed by the official argument, such factors, if they actually existed, were secondary. For example, the colonial government's definition of police efficiency as demonstrated above was not in the interest of the colonised, rather it was meant to serve the interest of the coloniser. Similarly, the decision to increase the expenditure on the Police was an attempt to strengthen the Police so it would effectively suppress natives' revolts against obnoxious economic policies and protect the lives of colonial officials and other British residing in the colony. It is therefore the opinion of this paper that, the amalgamation was largely part of the established imperial strategy, which was tilted towards effective drain of Nigeria for the development of Britain.

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